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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 002580

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SE](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: KOSOVO DEVELOPMENTS IN LIGHT OF GEORGIA

REF: A. SECSTATE 90978
[1](#)B. MOSCOW 2545
[1](#)C. MOSCOW 1564

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Alice G. Wells: reasons 1.4
(b, d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In an August 26 meeting immediately prior to Russia's recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, MFA Special Envoy for Kosovo Aleksandr Botsan-Kharchenko justified the independence of the territories, arguing that the "genocide" of Ossetians exceeded the suffering of Kosovars in 1999. Serbian diplomats, reiterating Belgrade's strategy of "strategic silence," took issue with GOR efforts to depict Serbian support for actions in Georgia. Botsan-Kharchenko described a compromise-seeking Belgrade on all but the issue of Kosovo's recognition. He expressed disappointment with the UNSYG's handling of the transition of UNMIK to EULEX. Underscoring Russian support for continuing the OSCE mission in Kosovo, he urged U.S. endorsement of the Swiss candidate, taking into account Belgrade's opposition to the Austrian nominee. Botsan-Kharchenko questioned U.S. opposition to the ICJ ruling, arguing it provided cover to Tadic to make compromises elsewhere. On Bosnia, he downplayed RS PM Dodik's rhetoric, asserting the RS leadership remained loyal to the state, if not at the expense of the entities. End Summary

Kosovo Precedent for Georgia

[1](#)2. (C) In an August 26 meeting that immediately preceded Russia's announcement of its recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, MFA Special Envoy for Kosovo Aleksandr Botsan-Kharchenko underlined that the GOR considered Kosovo a precedent for Russian actions, but stressed that it Russia had taken "no initiative to put Abkhazia and South Ossetia on the path of independence." Over our objections (Ref A), Botsan-Kharchenko continued to draw parallels between Kosovo and Georgia, arguing that the "genocide" experienced by the Ossetians outstripped the suffering of Kosovars in 1999. The only difference in the situation, he maintained, was that the Serbs were not responsible for bombing Kosovo, in contrast to Saakashvili's violence. Noting the August 25 parliamentary debate over extending recognition, Botsan-Kharchenko expressed his approval for statements made by representatives that South Ossetia and Abkhazia had more of a right to independence and self-determination than Kosovo (Ref B).

MFA Twists Belgrade's Position

[1](#)3. (C) Serbian Charge Yelitsa Kuryak confirmed to us on August 25 that Belgrade sought a low profile in this conflict, given the obvious shift in Russian position on the "primacy of international law" and the parallels between Kosovo and the Georgian territories: "we are silent." Kuryak stated that "we must support the territorial integrity of Georgia" and that Russian recognition of South Ossetia and

Abkhazia would be "a very bad step." She was quick to dispel Russian media reports of Serbian humanitarian assistance to South Ossetia, noting that the news had been planted by a Serbian businessman resident in Moscow, who had close ties to former President Kostunica. While Serbia would not issue a denial, Kuryak said there were in fact no shipments of assistance to South Ossetia. The MFA also had gone silent, Kuryak noted, and had held no consultations with the Serbian Embassy over the consequences of Russia's policy in Georgia for its support for Serbian territorial integrity. There was continued pressure from Russian officials for Belgrade to ratify the energy agreement, with Kuryak questioning Russian good faith over the long-term, noting that there was no similar Russian ratification planned.

Russia On Changing Stance in Belgrade; UNSYG

14. (C) In response to our concerns that a complete transition to EULEX was required in order to prevent efforts at de facto partition, Botsan-Kharchenko observed that Belgrade had reduced its rhetoric on Kosovo due to its desire to work with the EU. While Belgrade could not recognize Kosovo, Botsan-Kharchenko argued that the Tadic government was looking for reasons to work with the international community. He assessed that Belgrade could ultimately accept EULEX, as long as there was some figleaf of UN cover. Botsan-Kharchenko predicted firmer opposition to EULEX among Kosovar Serbs, and pushed for the officers to be posted under an UNMIK umbrella. While welcoming the dialogue between UNMIK and Belgrade, Botsan-Kharchenko stressed Russian disappointment that UNSYG Ban Ki-Moon agreed to a transfer of

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authority from UNMIK to EULEX without receiving approval of the broader UN.

OSCE

15. (C) Botsan-Kharchenko said that Russia believed the OSCE had a continuing role to play in Kosovo, but stressed the need for Belgrade's approval of the OSCE mission head, since it was the "host-country" (Ref C). While acknowledging our objections, Botsan-Kharchenko argued that on "purely technical grounds" it made sense to support the Swiss candidate, who was acceptable to Belgrade, over the new candidate from Austria, who would not be acceptable. Russia would continue to urge international consideration of Belgrade's interests, and believed that U.S. support for the Austrian sacrificed the larger goal of an effective OSCE operation in Kosovo.

Taking the Case to ICJ

16. (C) Botsan-Kharchenko said Russia had difficulty understanding U.S. objections to Belgrade's proposed review of Kosovo's independence by the International Court of Justice (ICJ). He argued that Russia supported the proposal for "practical reasons," since the adoption of a resolution at UNGA would enable Tadic to demonstrate to domestic constituencies that "he has done all he can." Botsan-Kharchenko said it was in the West's interest to ease pressure on Tadic and provide him room to maneuver. Any ICJ decision, he argued, would be "years in the making" and was unlikely to be clear-cut in the final analysis. For tactical reasons, the ICJ was worthwhile as a pressure valve.

Bosnia: Don't Overestimate Dodik

17. (C) Noting our concerns over continued statements and actions by the RS PM to weaken the Bosnian Federation, Botsan-Kharchenko urged the U.S. to not overestimate the importance of Dodik's pronouncements. In a change of tone,

Botsan-Kharchenko argued that neither Russia nor Dodik saw in Kosovo a precedent to be applied to Republika Serbska. Dodik, Botsan-Kharchenko asserted, supported the Dayton Accords, but would continue to oppose efforts to strengthen the center at the expense of the entities' continued survival.

BEYRLE